



**Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission**  
**Hearing on “Safeguarding the People of Nagorno-Karabakh”**  
June 21, 2023- 2:15 p.m.

**STATEMENT SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD**

**On behalf of the Congressional Armenian Staff Association (CASA) Board Members**

*The Congressional Armenian Staff Association (CASA) is a non-partisan, bicameral Congressional staff organization recognized by the U.S. House Committee on House Administration. CASA aims to recruit, retain, and advance Armenian-American staffers in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, and is dedicated to encouraging career development and increasing opportunities for its members.*

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Dear Members of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission,

We thank you for holding this very important hearing and shining a light on the critical situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. As Armenian-American congressional staffers, we are deeply concerned about the safety and security of Armenians in Artsakh amidst a dangerous blockade of the Lachin Corridor, numerous ceasefire violations by Azerbaijan, and genocidal remarks by governmental officials from Azerbaijan, including President Ilham Aliyev.

For over 6 months, Armenians in Artsakh have been subject to a blockade that has resulted in severe shortages in food, life-saving medications, and other crucial health supplies. As Amnesty International [notes](#),<sup>1</sup> the blockade is “endangering the lives of thousands of people” and, along with the [International Criminal Court](#),<sup>2</sup> has called for the corridor to be reopened by Azerbaijani authorities. Moreover, the blockade violates international humanitarian law, and the ceasefire that ended the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) War roughly 2.5 years ago.

In fact, it is one in a series of escalatory actions by Azerbaijan following the ceasefire. These actions include cuts to electricity, internet, water, and heat in Artsakh, daily documented attacks

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<sup>1</sup> Amnesty International. “Azerbaijan: Blockade of Lachin Corridor Putting Thousands of Lives in Peril Must Be Immediately Lifted.” *Amnesty International*, 9 Feb. 2023, [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/02/azerbaijan-blockade-of-lachin-corridor-putting-thousands-of-lives-in-peril-must-be-immediately-lifted/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/02/azerbaijan-blockade-of-lachin-corridor-putting-thousands-of-lives-in-peril-must-be-immediately-lifted/).

<sup>2</sup> Avedian, Lillian. “International Court of Justice Rules That Azerbaijan Must Open Lachin Corridor.” *The Armenian Weekly*, 22 Feb. 2023, [armenianweekly.com/2023/02/22/international-court-of-justice-rules-that-azerbaijan-must-open-lachin-corridor/](http://armenianweekly.com/2023/02/22/international-court-of-justice-rules-that-azerbaijan-must-open-lachin-corridor/).

on Artsakh and Armenia proper, and the failure of Azerbaijan to release Armenian prisoners of war. This behavior follows a war where Azerbaijani forces committed horrific and well-documented human rights abuses, including deliberate targeting of churches, homes, schools, and medical facilities with prohibited weapons.

Azerbaijan's behavior during and following the war must be viewed in the context of genocidal remarks by governmental officials from Azerbaijan. For example, President Aliyev [has claimed](#)<sup>3</sup> that "Western Azerbaijan [Armenia] is our historical land," and "the newly established Azerbaijan People's Republic in 1918 practically donated our historical city — Yerevan — to Armenia."

**We urge Members of Congress and the Biden Administration to stand with the Armenian people by using diplomatic levers to bring this blockade to an end and secure a lasting peace in the region.** In particular, the United States should not be selling weapons to Azerbaijan as it continues to persecute Armenians. The Biden Administration must end its waiver of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, which prohibits the sale of military equipment to Azerbaijan. The Biden Administration must apply diplomatic pressure on Turkey and Israel to stop their arms sales to Baku. Finally, the U.S. should take an active role in negotiating a peace settlement that protects the territorial integrity of Armenia and allows Artsakh Armenians self-determination.

Many of us are in the U.S. today because our families fled genocide and persecution in the Ottoman Empire. Today, we fear the possibility of a [second genocide](#)<sup>4</sup>. We've watched in horror as anti-Armenian sentiment in Türkiye and Azerbaijan has increased, threatening ethnic Armenians living in those countries, across the region, and here in the United States. We've been stunned by the lack of response from the international community, and we are calling on our government to stand up for Armenians in Artsakh, who, like all people, have a right to life, liberty, and justice on their indigenous land.

Sincerely,

Congressional Armenian Staff Association (CASA) Board Members

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<sup>3</sup> "Aliyev Says Yerevan 'Historically' Azerbaijani." *OC Media*, 24 Dec. 2022, [oc-media.org/aliyev-says-yerevan-historically-azerbaijani/](https://oc-media.org/aliyev-says-yerevan-historically-azerbaijani/).

<sup>4</sup> Hill, Nat. "Genocide Warning: Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh." *Genocide Watch*, 23 Sept. 2022, [www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/genocide-warning-azerbaijan-and-nagorno-karabakh-september-2022](https://www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/genocide-warning-azerbaijan-and-nagorno-karabakh-september-2022).